

Message Text

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11/21

ACTION EA-13

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5928

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INFO CNCPAC

CINCUNC

S E C R E T SEOUL 6103

LIMDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA TWO LIN 3 F-4ES VICE F-4S)

JOINT EMBASSY/COMUSK MESSAGE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, MASS, KS, US

SUBJECT: ROKG FIGHTER AIRCRAFT PROCUREMENT

1. AT GENERAL STILWELL'S URGING, ROK MND HAS CONDUCTED EXAMINATION OF ALTERNATIVE FUTURE ROKAF FORCE STRUCTURES FROM STANDPOINTS OF OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS, INDIGENOUS MAINTENANCE/PRODUCTION POTENTIAL AND COSTS. THESE ALTERNATIVES HAVE BEEN EXTENSIVELY DISCUSSED BY GENERALS STILWELL AND MURPHY WITH MND SUH AND AF CHIEF CHOO YOUNG BOCK. ROKG HAS SETTLED ON FOLLOWING ALTERNATIVE AS BASIC PLAN FOR LONG RANGE MODERNIZATION OF ROKAF.

A. F-5E TO BE BACKBONE OF FORCE. IN ADDITION TO 72 MAP-FURNISHED F-5E AIRCRAFTS, A MINIMUM OF 3 SQUADRONS (54 UE) OF F-5E TO BE PURCHASED OR COPRODUCED;

B. A SINGLE F-4 WING COMPOSED OF THE F-4DS CURRENTLY HELD AND
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I SQUADRON (UE18) OF F-4ES. EXPLICIT IN THIS IS RETENTION OF THE

BAILED F-4D SQUADRON (WHICH ROKG WILL PURCHASE WITH CASH) AND;
PROCUREMENT OF F-4E SQUADRON FOR DELIVERY IN FY 78.

C. PREFERENCE FOR FOLLOW-ON AIRCRAFT IS LIGHT WEIGHT FIGHTER.
DECISION ON PATH OF LONGER RANGE MODERNIZATION TO BE MADE AFTER
RESULTS OF USAF COMPETITIVE TEST (YF-16 VS. YF-17) BECOME AVAILABLE.
SHOULD USAF FAIL TO ADOPT EITHER, DECISION WOULD THEN BE MADE ON OTHER

SUITABLE US FIRST LINE AIRCRAFT FOR INCORPORATION INTO ROKAF
STRUCTURE
IN THE LATE 70'S OR EARLY 1980'S.

2. GENERAL STILWELL AS CINCUNC ACCEPTED VALIDITY MND AND AF/COS
DECISION ON REQUIREMENTS DESCRIBED ABOVE WITH FOLLOWING IMPORTANT
QUALIFICATION: "CINCUNC BELIEVES THAT DECISION TO BUY ANY F-4ES
SHOULD BE DEFERRED UNTIL THE RESULTS OF THE YF-16 AND YF-17
COMPETITION BECOME AVAILABLE IN JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1975. IF
THE F-16 OR F-17 PROVES EQUAL TO OR SUPERIOR TO THE F-4E,
THE ROK GOVERNMENT WILL THEN HAVE MAXIMUM FLEXIBILITY WITH RESPECT
TO COURSE OF MODERNIZATION".

" IF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA GOVERNMENT DOES NOT WISH TO DEFER
DECISION TO BUY THE ONE F-4E SQUADRON UNTIL THE COMPETITION RESULTS
ARE AVAILABLE, CINCUNC WILL ACCEPT THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA GOVERNMENT'S
DETERMINATION."

3. IN COURSE OF DISCUSSIONS, SUH WAS EXPLICIT IN STATING ROKG
DETERMINATION TO PROCEED ALONG LINES OUTLINED ABOVE. SUH WAS
CATEGORIC IN HIS ASSESSMENT OF NEED FOR ONE F-4 WING BUT AT SAME
TIME INDICATED THAT ROKG RECOGNIZED DESIRABILITY OF LIMITING
F-4E PROCUREMENT TO ONE SQUADRON AND DROPPED CONSIDERATION OF A-7'S.

4. IN THIS MESSAGE WE WISH TO STRESS IMPORTANT BROADER CONSIDERATIONS

WHICH BEAR ON ANY WASHINGTON DECISION. AS IS CLEAR, ROKG HAS
NOW BACKED AWAY FROM CO-PRODUCTION OF THE EXPENSIVE
F-4E AND WOULD LIMIT ITS PROCUREMENT TO ONE SQUADRON. THIS HAS
BEEN DUE TO THE CONSTANT DIALOGUE UNDERTAKEN BY SENIOR UNC OFFICERS
WITH MND AND ROK/AF OFFICERS. ROKG DETERMINATION TO BUY ONE F-4E
SQ IS PRESENTLY FIRM AND ANY ATTEMPT ON OUR PART TO FURTHER DISSUADE
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MND IS LIKELY TO BE UNSUCCESSFUL. AS MEASURE THEIR SERIOUSNESS,
ROKG IS WILLING TO BACK ITS DECISION WITH FMS CREDIT/CASH PURCHASE OF
AIRCRAFT. ON OTHER HAND, IT IS GENERAL STILWELL'S ESTIMATE THAT
MND WILL REFRAIN FROM TRANSLATING DECISION TO BUY INTO FINANCIAL
COMMITMENT UNTIL RESULTS OF YF-16/17 COMPETITION ARE AVAILABLE.
WE SHOULD, THEREFORE, KEEP MND CONSTANTLY APPRISED OF RESULTS OF
ONGOING COMPETITION BETWEEN YF-16 AND YF-17, SO THAT THEY CAN ALTER
DECISION ON F-4E IF THEY SO DESIRE.

5. AS WE HAVE POINTED OUT IN PREVIOUS MESSAGES, ROKG HAS IN FACT PREDICATED ITS PLANNING ON RETENTION OF THE BAILED F-4D SQ WHICH IT NOW HAS. ANY ATTEMPT BY US TO REACQUIRE SQUADRON IN FACE OF ROKG'S WILLINGNESS TO BUY IT WOULD POSE A MOST SERIOUS PROBLEM IN OUR RELATIONS.

6. DURING THE DISCUSSIONS, MND SUH AND AF/COS CHOO BOTH STRESSED CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE FROM ROKG (AND THEIR OWN PERSONAL) VIEW OF FAVORABLE US DECISION AT UPCOMING SCM. SUH, WE BELIEVE, IS AWARE LIKELIHOOD THAT SESSION WILL BE FORUM FOR USG SIDE DELIVERING BAD NEWS ON SECURITY ASSISTANCE FUTURE. HE HAS CONSEQUENTLY FOCUSED ON AIRCRAFT DECISION AS BEING ONE MAJOR AREA WHERE FAVORABLE USG ACTION COULD AND SHOULD BE TAKEN, PARTICULARLY AS MND HAS IN GREAT MEASURE NOW ACCEPTED OUR VIEWS.

7. GIVEN OUR INTENTION TO USE SCM FOR CANDID EXPOSITION OF LIKELY FUTURE DIRECTION OF US SECURITY ASSISTANCE AS WELL AS OTHER MATTERS WE BELIEVE THERE IS SOUND POLITICAL JUSTIFICATION FOR REACTING FAVORABLY AND QUICKLY TO THE LATEST ROKG POSITION ON AIRCRAFT PROCUREMENT. IF WE ARE ABLE TO BE FORTHCOMING ON AIRCRAFT ISSUE (ON WHICH WE HAVE ALREADY WON MAJOR POINTS), BELIEVE ROKG REACTION TO OTHER LESS PALATABLE NEWS WILL BE MUTED. A NEGATIVE RESPONSE WILL BE INTERPRETED, IN CONTEXT OTHER USG ACTIONS AT SCM, AS INDICATION THAT USG MOVING PRECIPITOUSLY AWAY FROM THE ROK AND WITHOUT REGARD FOR VALID KOREAN SECURITY INTERESTS.

8. IN SUM, WE RECOMMEND THAT AT SCM WE TAKE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:

A. ASSURE MND SUH THAT WE ARE PREPARED TO CONSIDER SALE OF BAILED F-4D SQ AND PROPOSE THAT NEGOTIATIONS BEGIN AFTER HIS RETURN TO SEOUL

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AND

B. TELL SUH THAT WE STILL BELIEVE ROKG WOULD BE BETTER ADVISED TO CONTINUE TO DEFER COMMITMENT ON F-4E PROCUREMENT. HOWEVER, IF AFTER FURTHER MND/COMUSK REVIEW, ROKG STILL WISHES TO PROCURE SINGLE F-4E SQ, WE WILL NOT OPPOSE IT. THIS WOULD BE ON UNDERSTANDING THAT FUTURE ROKG PROCUREMENT WOULD BE F-5E SQUADRONS AND, POSSIBLY THE YF-16 OR 17, DEPENDING UPON THE US DECISION ON DEVELOPMENT.

9. REQUEST ABOVE RECOMMENDATION BE GIVEN URGENT CONSIDERATION AND THAT FAVORABLE DECISION BE MADE IN TIME FOR SCM.
ERICSON

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NNN

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